

Trio of new editions tops the 1978 gift-giving list

By Roger Boye

NUMISMATIC book publishers have been cranking out new editions of some of the hobby's basic references, as usually happens before the holiday gift-giving season. Here are a few notes about the books:

● "Paper Money of the United States," ninth edition, by Robert Friedberg, with additions and revisions by Arthur L. and Ira S. Friedberg.

This 251-page book is considered the basic reference on paper money — and with good reason. When the late Robert Friedberg compiled the first edition in 1953, he numbered each piece of currency to be listed in the book, starting with the demand notes of 1861. Those "Friedberg numbers" became a hobby standard because collectors quickly discovered the ease of saying, for example, "Friedberg 1701," rather than "\$10 silver certificate, series 1934, with signatures of W.A. Julian and Henry Morgenthau Jr."

Naturally, Friedberg's two sons included the numbers in the newest edition, the first revision since 1975. They also kept intact the basic format used in the earlier editions, while updating information about the collector value of all the bills. Unfortunately, the authors listed only an uncirculated price for some of the more recent bills; they certainly had space on the 8-by-11-inch pages to include prices in a couple of other condition categories, too.

But in spite of this and a few other minor deficiencies, the hardbound book remains "top of the line" (with a price to match: \$17.50). It's well organized

and beautifully printed, and includes not only large and small size notes but also fractional currency and encased postage stamps.

Best of all, many of the hundreds of pictures are printed at the unusually large size of 5 inches by 2 inches. It's a pleasure to look at pictures of old bills without having to squint to see the serial numbers.

The book is sold in many coin and book stores, or may be ordered from the co-publisher, Krause Publications, 700 E. State St., Iola, Wis. 54945.

● "Handbook of United States Coins," 36th edition, by R.S. Yeoman. Unlike most annually published catalogs, the "Blue Book" lists wholesale, not retail, prices for United States coins in several condition categories. The prices give collectors an idea of what dealers might pay to acquire old or rare coins.

Many hobby stores report that the Blue Book is one of their faster-selling items. That's due in part to the \$2.95 price, not bad these days for a hard-cover book.

● "The Official 1979 Blackbook Price Guide of United States Paper Money," 11th edition, by Theodore Kemm. This is a paperback that lists dealer selling and buying prices for currency made since 1861. The price information is more complete than in Friedberg's book, but there isn't nearly as much explanatory material, nor are the pictures as good. Nevertheless, the novice might find it helpful.

Kemm's book and a companion publication on coins by Tom Hudgeons are sold locally, or they may be ordered for \$1.95 each from House of Collectibles Inc., 771 Kirkman Rd., Suite 100, Orlando, Fla. 32811.